

# Musings on the Apocalypse

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The opening of this wondrous book gives us its title and character — "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him." For it will be found, I judge, to be a *revelation* of the Lord Jesus Christ in such characters of glory and power as He derives from God, or a revelation of Him in the exercise of judicial authority.

Now two exercises of judicial authority awaited Him after He had ascended to God, and accordingly this book has two parts.

Revelation 1 - 3 give us the *first part*. The Lord is here exercising judgment in *the Church*, or among the lights of the sanctuary. This is called "*the things which are.*"

Revelation 4 - 22 give us the *second part*. The Lord is here exercising judgment in *the earth*, preparing it for His kingdom. This is called "*the things which shall be hereafter*" (*or, after these*).

This is the general order of the book, but these two parts contain properly both a preface and a conclusion.

In the preface (Rev. 1: 1-8) we first learn that this wondrous book deals with "the word of God" and "the testimony of Jesus Christ"; that is, God's counsels made known by Jesus Christ. Then we are told the manner in which Jesus Christ ministers this testimony to the churches, and blessing is then pronounced on him who acts righteously *by this book*, by either reading or hearing it, and then by keeping the things which are written in it.

After this the seven churches in Asia are called to listen. and after a benediction on them, the Lord Jesus Christ is announced as the One who is about to come "with clouds," or in the solemnities of judgment. (Dan. 7: 13; Matt. 24: 30; Matt. 26: 64) A coming quite according to the judicial character of the book. and which is to make the kindreds of the earth wail because of Him, and them which pierced Him to see Him to their confusion.

But in the midst of such an announcement of the Lord as even this, the saints have two sweet and happy utterances put into their lips. On His being here revealed as "the Faithful Witness," "the First-begotten from the dead." and "the Prince of the kings of the earth," they praise Him as the One who had loved them. And again, when His coming in the clouds as for judgment is announced, they invite His glory with full confidence still, and say, "*Even so, Amen.*" For they have thoroughly learned that they may have boldness even in a day of judgment. (1 John 4: 17) Then, when these utterances of the saints pass by, the Lord reveals Himself as the First and the Last — a title which He frequently takes in this book — the very title, too, that He so constantly assumes when judging the idols of Babylon in Isaiah (see Isaiah 48), all this still assuring us that He is now about to speak *in judgment* again. In the mouth indeed of every witness here we learn that *this book* is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which God, not the *Father*, gives Him; or. in judgment. *not in grace*. But this is only here at the close of the volume of the New Testament; for I may observe that the Lord has ever sought, so to speak, to publish His name in grace before He does so in judgment.

In some way or other He will and must make Himself known, for that is His glory; but He seeks the rather to be known in goodness than in judgment, if men will hear. We have this variously illustrated. To Egypt, for instance, the Lord made Himself known in Joseph, the witness of His

goodness; for by Joseph He filled Egypt's storehouses with all kinds of wealth. But Egypt forgot Joseph. A king arose then who persecuted Joseph's people, and said of his God, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Then the Lord had to publish His name in that land in Judgment, saying to the king, "In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord: behold, I will smite with the rod." He was now to be made known, not in Joseph, but in plagues.

So in Israel afterwards. The Lord Jesus Christ was offered to them as "the chief cornerstone, the sure foundation," the One in whom they should find salvation and strength; but being rejected as such, he was to be revealed to them as "the head stone of the corner," in the power and judgment of an exalted stone, which was to fall and grind to powder.

And so in the *world* now. This present dispensation is publishing God in grace, He is beseeching men to be reconciled. But they who will not thus know Him, neglecting "the great salvation," must know Him, by and by in judgments. (2 Thess. 1: 8) If the *blood* of the Lamb be despised, the *wrath* of the Lamb must await. (Rev. 6: 16, 17) The same One who is "full of grace and truth" now, will by and by send the sword out of His mouth to execute judgment. (Rev. 19: 15) And this is the difference between the Gospel and the Revelation by St. John. The Gospel publishes the name of the Lord in grace, the Revelation in judgment. The one flows from the Father, the other from God. Now according to all this, when we pass the preface and get into the body of the book, it is the Lord, the Son of Man in the place of judgment, that we at once see. (See Rev. 1: 9-20)

These verses introduce the first scene which the book discloses, and here St. John sees the Lord as High Priest prepared to judge the sanctuary. He does not show Himself to John as the Priest at the golden altar, with the censer and the burning incense, but at the candlestick with the golden snuffers, as though He were inquiring, and that too for the last time, whether or not the lamps of the sanctuary would burn worthy of the place, or whether He should not be compelled soon to remove them. It is the Son of man, with garments down to the foot, and golden girdle about His loins, with head and hair white as wool, eyes of flame, feet of brass, and voice of many waters, in His hand holding the seven stars, and in His mouth the *two-edged sword*, and walking in the brightness and power of the midday sun, among the seven candlesticks. All this was an expression of judgment "of the house of God," a revelation of the Priest, not at the altar with incense, not even at the candlestick with oil to feed it, but at the candlestick with the snuffers to judge and trim it, as being out of order. John shall hear himself personally and individually addressed with the wonted words of God's sweet love to us, "Fear not"; but still this is a vision that may well make the stoutest of the children of men to fall as dead.

And it is quite according to such an introduction as this that we find our Lord in the following scene. (Rev. 2: 1) Here it is the Lord in "the house of God" challenging the churches to answer for themselves. He had before set them in the blessing, and now He looks for fruit. It is as though He had heard a report of their unfaithfulness, and was now saying unto them, "How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." He had already communicated with them through the apostles, but now he does so through the angels. St. Paul addressed them in the *pastoral* grace of Christ; St. John now addresses them as from the *judicial* authority of Christ. The apostles had fed them and disciplined them as in the place of dependence, but now these epistles challenge them as in the place of responsibility, and the moment they are thus addressed they are found wanting as candlesticks bound to shine to the praise of Him who had set them in His sanctuary. They are now visited, and the common result of all such visitations of God's stewards may tell us the end of the candlesticks also.

For the crisis or judgment has always found man unready. Whether planted in innocence, in a

sphere of providence, or under a ministration of grace, man has been found unequal even to hold a blessing. "Adam, where art thou?" got this answer, "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" The vineyard of Israel afterwards should have yielded its fruit to Him who had planted and dressed it, but when He came it was only wild grapes that He found. And so it is now with the candlesticks in the house of God. They had been duly prepared by God's care. They were nothing less than golden candlesticks, churches fed by the Spirit, blessed with blessings from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, made fully furnished and well ordered lights in the sanctuary. But now that the visitation is made, in due season too, the Son of man finds something unsuited to the Holy place. These seven churches (the seven fold or perfect expression of the church) are here challenged by the Son of man with these words, "I know thy works," but the seven fold light is but dim and uncertain. This steward of God's glory is but unfaithful also. And so by and by the same inquisition will be made of "the earthly gods," the Gentile powers to whom the Lord has committed the sword, and they will then in like manner as Adam, Israel, or the candlesticks, be found wanting, and they will have to fall as men and die like one of the princes. (Psalm 82) All the stewards are thus found wanting, when weighed in the balance, and the Lord is justified in His saying and clear when He judges.

These seven churches are here as in the place of this judgment. There were, it is true, other congregations of the Lord at the time, but these seven are enough to exhibit the judgment, for seven is completeness. So some of them may be found by this judgment or visitation in a better condition than others; but still the Son of man\* sees the whole thing far different from what it ought to be. One was not judged in the other, but each was responsible for itself, and thus some maintained their purity longer than others. But still the whole tone of this visitation bears with it a notice of what the end speedily was to be. As in our day we see it, for Philadelphia and Smyrna are now as fully removed candlesticks as Sardis or Pergamos.

\*The Son of man is the Lord's title here (Rev. 1: 13), and that belongs to Him in Judgment. (John 5: 27)

These challenges of the churches by the Son of man lead us to see that all was then nearly over, that there was but a step between such rebukes and their removal. And, surely, we do not in our day need to be told of the disturbance which has taken place in the house of God. We learn that Adam lost Eden, and the present groans of creation tell us so. We learn that Israel lost Canaan, and their present wanderings over the earth tell us so. And how see we the sanctuary? Are we not witnesses to ourselves that we have been no more able to hold the blessing which was ours, than Adam could hold Eden, or Israel Canaan? The candlestick that was set for the rebuking of all that was without as darkness, and for being itself the embodied and well ordered light of the world, is not now at Ephesus, or even Sardis. But where is anything like it? Can any one thing, in any one place, assert the honour of being the Lord's candle there, and show that the Lord is feeding, and judging, and trimming it as such? In this day of St. John the Lord still owned the candlesticks, owned them by thus visiting and judging them. But is there such recognition now? We may try out ways most surely by all that is here said to the churches, but this does not amount to the Son of man owning us by judgment. And our first duty therefore, both in grace and wisdom, is to be humbled because of this; for though we may have much in fragments that belongs to the candlesticks, yet all *that does* not give us the standing and privilege of the candlestick entitling us to set aside as darkness, and as not of the sanctuary, all that is not of ourselves.

When our fidelity to the Lord became the question, we were found wanting, as any other steward. This book will, at the end, show us that the question of the Lord's fidelity to us will be answered in the other way; for, as the Lamb's wife the Church will then be found to survive all the judgments, though

here she could not as the candlestick stand the righteous challenge of the Lord. And this is man — and this is God always; shame and ruin mark our end — honour and peace, and everlasting truth and love, the end of the Lord. And in this shame and ruin, I believe, these three chapters close; the perfect order of the seven lights of the house of God is gone, not to be restored; and according to this, the prophet is at once called to see other things and other places, to witness another scene, but still a scene of judgment, as we shall find; not that of the priestly Son of man in His temple, but that of God and the Lamb in the earth.

But this judgment is delayed till all the fore-known family have come in; for God's long-suffering is salvation (2 Peter 3: 15). The fulness of the Gentiles must come in, and all be brought to the knowledge of the Son of God. (Rom. 11: 25; Eph. 4: 13) Therefore, before we are led in our prophet to behold this second scene of judgment, or the judgment of the earth, we are given, I believe, *a sight of the Church in heaven*,\* under the symbols of the living creatures, and crowned elders round the throne; so that the rapture of the saints into the air had taken place at some untold moment between the times of our third and fourth chapters.

\*The twenty-four elders no doubt represent the *whole* company of the redeemed in glory from Adam down to the rapture, and not the Church exclusively. — Ed.

But here I would pause a little. We have not, I am aware, this ascension of the saints actually presented here. We learn it in the appointed Scripture (1 Thess. 4), and that rapture will lead both to the Lord Himself and then to the Father. But it is not these results that we get here. It is not the saints, either in the Lord's presence, or in the mansions of the Father's house, that we see here, but the Church before the throne of God Almighty, of Him who was, and is, and is to come, for whose pleasure all things were created. This is the scene we get here. It is not the children before the Father, but the Church in dignity before the throne.

But how perfect is the wisdom of God in appointing all the reasons for revealing His mind and purposes! A view of the Father's house would not have been in character here, for this is the book, not of consolation for the children of the Father, but of judgment by which God and the Lamb are asserting their holy rights, vindicating their own praise, and delivering the long-usurped and corrupted inheritance out of the hands of its destroyers. The Gospel by St. John conducts us to the Father's house; our path there ends, as the path of *children*, in that house of love; but this Apocalypse by St. John gives us the action that gets the golden city ready for us, and our path here ends, as the path of *heirs*, in that place of glory; for both are ours, the joys of children, and the dignity of heirs; the house of the Father, and the throne of the Son.

Here then, when taken into vision of heavenly things, it is the throne of God with its due attendants, and not the Father's house with the children, that we see. It is the throne of God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of all things, around which is, therefore, thrown the holy pledge of the earth's covenanted security. And it is the place, too, from which the subsequent action of the book, or the judgment of the earth, flows; and, therefore, lightnings and thunders, and voices (the symbols of these judgments), here issue from it. And it is the throne, also, which is to rule the world to come, or the kingdom at the end. And, therefore, the seven spirits (the symbol of that energy by which that kingdom is to be maintained, Isaiah 11: 1-3), are here seen before it; and in connection with this government of the kingdom, or "world to come," we see the Church in the symbol of the living creatures and elders also around it. But as to this wondrous subject of the living creatures, or the cherubim, I would observe a little more particularly. Whenever we see them throughout Scripture, they are always attendants upon the throne of God; always reflecting by their action, or attitude, the mind and ways of Him who sits

there.\*

\*They were therefore, I judge, made out of one piece of gold with the throne itself. (See Exodus 25: 19)

1. Thus they are seen at the gate of Eden, with a flaming sword, because there the Lord was expressing His own unrepenting righteousness in the law, driving, as He then was, the sinner out of His place.

2. Thus also they are seen over the mercy seat in the holiest, with fixed, delighted gaze, inquiring into the secrets of that throne of grace, because there the Lord was expressing His work in Jesus, the fixedness of His purpose, and joy in the gospel of His dear Son. (Exodus 25: 20; 1 Peter 1: 12)

3. Thus also they are seen with unfolded wings under the God of Israel (Ezek. 1), because then the Lord of Israel was about to leave His sanctuary, the apostasy of His people having disturbed His rest in Jerusalem. And they are here also seen reaching out their hands to take fire to cast it over the city, for then the Lord had commanded the judgment of its sins.

4. Thus also, as here, they are seen round the throne, still attending on it, to celebrate the praise of Him who sits there, and do His will, and learn His mind; still, therefore, reflecting His mind and ways. But in this last place of the cherubim we observe a distinction of great importance. Hitherto, or in the first three instances, they were angelic, because the law had been ordained by *angels*. (Gal. 3: 19) With delight the angels inquired into the mysteries of Christ (1 Peter 1: 12), and *the angels* waited on the Lord of Israel. (Isaiah 6: 2) But now the cherubim, or attendants on the throne, have become human, because "the world to come" is to be made subject to man and not to angels (Heb. 2: 5), and this throne in Rev. 4 is the throne that is by and by to preside over "the world to come."

But this is glorious and wonderful. Poor sinners redeemed by blood are destined, through grace, to take the cherubic dignity and joy in which angels, unfallen angels, once stood; the angels themselves falling back, as it were, and opening their ranks to let redeemed sinners in, and then to take their own place around them as well as around the throne itself (Rev. 7).

Angels are thus passed by and the seed of Abraham taken up, and it is blessed to know that angels themselves take delight in this. They desire to look into this mystery. God manifest in the flesh is seen of them. (1 Tim. 3: 16) Their own joy is enhanced by all this, for by it they have learned more of the shining and gracious ways of Him who created them, as He has redeemed us, and on whom they as we depend. Beggars from the dunghill are set as among princes round the throne. The living creatures and the crowned elders accordingly, never, in the whole action of this wondrous book, move out of *heaven*, but there abide, either in the intelligence of the mind of God, or in authority under the throne, or in the holy office of leading the joy of creation. (See chaps. 5, 6, 7, 11, 15, 19) They abide in their sphere on high while the action proceeds on earth.\* Such I judge to be the throne with its attributes and attendants. It is the throne of the Creator and Upholder of all things, from which is to go forth the judgments which are to clear the earth of its corrupters and destroyers, and then to have connection with the redeemed earth in "the world to come."

\*There was something like this order of living creatures and crowned elders in Israel; I mean in the way in which the ark was attended. The priests and the Levites surrounded the ark in a nearer and smaller circle, and then the twelve tribes (on each side three) encompassed it in a larger and more distant circle or square; thus the one had more intimacy with it than the other, as here the order of living creatures, elders, and angelic hosts around the throne. (see Numbers 1 - 4)

But the throne being thus seen, and God's glory and pleasure as Creator and Governor of all

things being thus celebrated, the question arises, Who can He *seat* on the throne with Himself? "Who shall ascend into the *hill*\* of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" The earth and its fullness is the Lord's by the title of creation here celebrated, and owned in Psalm 24; but it was His pleasure of old to set His image over these works of His hand. Adam was given dominion, but Adam lost his place, and forfeited his kingdom. Who then shall reassume the dignity, again ascend the hill of the Lord? Who is he whom the Lord God can reinstate in Adam's forfeited lordship? That now becomes the question, and accordingly it is raised in Rev. 5, immediately after the exhibition of the supreme throne in Rev. 4, and the answer to it from every quarter is this: "The Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He who sat on the throne joins to give that answer by letting the book pass from His hand into that of the Lamb. The living creatures and elders join in giving it by singing their song of gladness in the prospect of the earth being soon the scene of their glory; the hosts of angels join in giving it, by now ascribing all strength, and glory, and faculty for dominion to the Lamb. Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and such as are in the sea, in their order and measure join in giving it, by uniting the name of the Lamb with that of their Creator and Lord, and they all at once feel as though their groans were already turned into praises, for as soon as Adam fell creation was sensitive of the cause, and became "a prisoner of hope" (Rom. 8: 20-22); but now that the Lamb takes the book, she becomes at once equally sensitive of deliverance, and glories in the liberty of the children of God. Thus is the question settled in heaven.

\*See Psalm 24. A hill is a symbol of government (Psalm 2: 6; Isaiah 2: 2)

The title of the Lamb to take dominion in the earth is owned and verified in the very place where alone all power and dominion or office could righteously be had, in the presence of the throne in heaven, for "power belongeth to God." Messiah owns that in Psalm 62, and here He again owns it by taking the book out of His hand, for that is an action which confesses on the part of the Lamb, that powers are ordained of God, that the Lord in heaven is the foundation of office. Thus it is in heaven, and from the Ancient of days, that the Son of man takes dominion, and the nobleman receives his kingdom. (Dan. 7; Luke 19) Jesus would not take power from the god of this world (Matt. 4: 9, 10), nor would he take it from the heated desire of the people. (John 6: 15) He waits to take it (for then alone it could be righteously received) from the hand of the God of heaven and earth, from whom Adam had of old received it. And as the Lamb here owns God on the throne to be the source of power, so God on the throne owns the Lamb to be His ordinance of power.

This action of taking the book has this concord of sweet sounds in it, for the Lamb goes up to receive it, and the Lord allows it to pass from His hand. God's glory as supreme and only potentate is thus vindicated, and He commits power in the earth again to the hand of man, as fully sanctioning it then, and all the exercise of it, as of old He did in Adam, delighting again in this other image and likeness of himself. And this governs all the subsequent action of this wondrous book, for the title to the kingdom being thus approved in the due place and from, it only remains to clothe that title with possession. The inheritance is the Lamb's by purchase of blood; that blood sealed Him as the fully obedient One, and therefore God could thus highly exalt Him (Phil. 2), and that blood had also reconciled all things in heaven and earth. (Col. 1) And the inheritance being therefore thus purchased, He has now only to redeem it. His blood as the Lamb slain had given Him the title to it; His strength as the Lion of the tribe of Judah must now give Him possession of it.

In Israel there was the ordinance of redeeming the inheritance, as well as the heir or person. (Lev. 25) If either an Israelite or his possession had been sold, it was both his kinsman's duty and right to ransom him and it; now Jesus has approved Himself our kinsman in both ways. The Son of God became the Son of man, and thus showed His kinsman nature. He died to purchase us and our

inheritance by blood, and thus showed His kinsman love, and in this book of the Revelation we get Him, I judge, perfecting His acts as such kinsman, and redeeming our inheritance out of the hand of its corrupters. The kinsman in Israel had title to redeem the inheritance, but then he had to do it on condition of discharging the debt that was on it. Jesus has paid His blood. a full and more than adequate value, as is here owned; for the book, or title to the redeemed possession, passes into His hand, and hence the action flows. But the usurper of the inheritance is still to be removed, the enemy to be made the kinsman's footstool. and whether the action be properly that of God, or that of the Lamb himself, the character of the action, I judge, is equally clear and certain. The action is the redemption of the inheritance flowing from the Lord's acknowledged title. The book taken by the Lamb is the title deed; and that it is so, and not a book of instruction to Him as the prophet of the Church, or any thing but this title deed that concerns the Church's inheritance of the earth, appears to me from several considerations.

First. Because it lay in the hand of God Almighty; the Creator of all things, before He receives it.

Second. Because it is taken by the Lord as the Lamb slain, and as the Lion of Judah, characters of purchase and strength.

Third. Because on the taking of it, the Church sings in prospect of her dominion *over the earth*. The angels who had been previously ministers of power in the earth, then transfer all that to the Lamb. and creation ends her groans in praises.

These witnesses establish in my mind the character of the book which the lamb takes, and the book of the Revelation is in concord with this.

It is the history of the redemption of the inheritance; I mean, of course, the second part of it, after the third chapter. It is the Joshua of the New Testament. It occupies the same place in the history of the acts of the Lord in the New Testament, as that book of Joshua does of the acts of the Lord in the Old. It records the manner of redeeming the inheritance, as that did, and without his acts as recorded in Joshua, the Lord's ways in old time would have been imperfect.

He had redeemed the heir out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, educated and trained him in the wilderness, and thus prepared him for rest in Canaan, but He had still to redeem Canaan out of the hand of the Amorite, and this act of His is recorded in Joshua. Then, but not till then, the Lord went through the whole course of His mercy and strength; and so without the Book of the Revelation, the record of the Lord's acts would in like manner have been incomplete. The Gospels and the Epistles tell us, like the Book of Moses, of the redemption of the heir and of his education in the wilderness of this present evil world, but now it is this closing Book of Revelation that tells us of the redemption of the inheritance, and thus properly closes and completes the perfect acts of the Lord in behalf of the Church of God.\*

\*If no kinsman were found able or willing to redeem the inheritance. it returned to the heir in the jubilee. The Lord of Israel thus kept in His own hand the means of restoring all things. He acted as Lord of the soil, and said the Land was His. (Lev. 25: 23) He created as it were a tenantry for forty-nine years, in the fiftieth year resuming the land, and then settling it anew on His family according to His own mind. And so with this earth, of which the land of Israel was the sample; man may take it into his own hand for a time, and by his covetousness on the one hand, or idle habits on the other, disturb God's order in it. But a day is coming, the promised and expected jubilee, the time of the restitution of all things, and then the earth shall be brought back to God again, and He will resettle it on His family according to His own holy and righteous principles. I might here observe that sacrifices may be allowed among the Jews in the kingdom, to keep in memory the blood of the Lamb which was the price

and purchase of the kingdom.

But the day of vengeance is united with the year of the redeemed (Isa. 63: 4; Isa. 34: 8; Isa. 61: 2); and accordingly the redemption of the inheritance is conducted by judgments, of vengeance on the enemies of the Heir of it, its usurpers and corrupters, as therefore from henceforth in this book (until the inheritance is redeemed, until the kingdom is brought in) it is judgment that is proceeding (Rev. 6 - 19). It may be seals that are opened, trumpets blown, or vials emptied, but all is preparing the inheritance for the Lamb of the Church. All is action for the redeeming of it, and bringing it into the hand of Him into whose hand the title deed of it, as we have seen, has already passed. And according to this, on His beginning this action, He receives both a *bow* and a *crown*; the one signifying that He was now going forth to judge and make war, the other that that warfare was to end in the kingdom. As is said to Him in another scripture, "Gird Thy *sword* upon Thy thigh, O most mighty," and then, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (Psalm 45)

Thus it is henceforth a book of judgments, as it has been hitherto, only judgments in another end, not of the candlesticks. but of the earth and its corrupters. Judgment had begun at the house of God, and now ends with those who would not obey the gospel. One enemy may appear after another, the beast, and the false prophet, the dragon, the great whore, or the kings of the earth, but it is only that each, in his season, may meet the judgment of the Lord. So there may be sorrow after sorrow — the woman may have to fly into the wilderness — the remnant of her seed to feel the rage of the dragon, and those who refuse to take the mark of the beast to know and exercise the patience of the saints, and the two witnesses to lie slain in the street of the great city; but all this sorrow is only leading on to the *rest* of the kingdom, or to the descent of the Golden City. The inheritance is thus redeemed by judgments out of hands of its corrupters, and then the righteous nations that have kept the truth enter. But in all this action, I judge, the Church has no place; but that the saints have been taken to meet their Lord in the air before it begins. This scene is one of judgment, and they have been removed, like Enoch, to another altogether. And I would now suggest a few reasons on which I ground this conclusion, as I did before for my conclusions on the character of the sealed book.

First. The saints are seen round the throne in heaven; or, as I have already noticed, in Rev. 4, and throughout the book onward from that, they are never seen but there; and this leads me to judge that the Church has been removed from the earth at some untold moment, between the time of chapters 3 and 4, as I have already said.

Second. At the opening of this action, Rev. 6, the same signs are given as had before been given by the Lord Himself to His Jewish remnant (Matt. 24) respecting the end of the world; and as in all that prophecy the Church is not contemplated, so do I judge that she is not contemplated here, but that it is the faithful Jewish election who are engaged in this action, as they only are considered in that prophecy.

Third. The judgments begin with Rev. 6, but as Joshua of old did not begin his wars till the redemption and discipline of the people were ended. and they were taken out of the wilderness, so, do I judge, will not the action of chapter 6 begin till the rapture of the saints, which closes the discipline of the Church and takes her out of the wilderness, is over.

Fourth. It is a scene of judgment. as I have already noticed, and the calling of the Church is that of Enoch, to be taken out of it, and not like Noah preserved *in* it. (See 1 Thess. 4 and 2 Thess. 2).

From such considerations I do conclude that the Church is not mixed up in the scene which now lies before us. They have been taken into their more immediate inheritance, which is in heaven (1 Peter 1: 4), which is to them the passage of the Jordan, before these judgments on the corrupters of the earth,

the mystic Amorites of Canaan, begin. These scenes are the wars of our Joshua — a remnant like Rahab is delivered out of the defiled place after they begin; but the saints have passed into their inheritance, though the whole of it is not yet subdued; and through these chapters (6 - 19) they wait in the house of the Father for it. But I do not particularly notice these chapters; indeed I do not believe that we are competent to speak of them with authority. We may draw much warning and exhortation from them, which we should lay deeply to heart as being that which the Lord would continually say to us, in order that we may stand in any evil day that may arise, as arise it may, to try and sift us at any hour. But of the scenes themselves I would not speak with authority. The Lord in them is clad with zeal as a cloak, the day of vengeance being in His heart, and the year of His redeemed having come, and onward thus He travels in the greatness of His strength till He couches in His kingdom as the Lion of Judah. The true day of Jericho, and of Ai, of the valley Ajalon, and of the waters of Merom, are here fought till the earth gets rest from war, and the people of the Lord dwell again in sure and quite habitation.\*

\*This book exhibits the same union as Isaiah 63: 4, for it gives, as I judge, the day of vengeance, and also the year of the redeemed, or the ransom of the true Israel.

However gloomy the way may be, this is the end of it, the end that we reach in this book.

The action was the judgment of the corrupters of the earth, and its result is the holy occupation of it by the Lord and His saints. The ways of our Joshua end in victory and the kingdom. The bow led to the crown. (Rev. 20: 1-6) "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them."

But before I hasten thus to the result of all this action, I would further observe, that in the progress of this action itself, we see, I believe, the deliverance of Jewish remnants from amid both the corruption and the judgment. Some of them suffer for righteousness even unto death, and then ascend to heaven to take their place on the sea of glass before the throne, and some are hid as in a city of refuge through the sorrow, sealed or measured for final security, and a place on the earth, or footstool of the royal Son of man. But in both ways they are separated from the corruption and the judgments around them. and after the wars of our Joshua begin, like Rahab are safe in the Lord, whom they own in the midst of the apostate nation. And I also see in the progress of this action the occasional joy of the family in heaven. (See chaps. 5, 7, 11, 14, 15, 19) Heaven is surely a place of *continuous* joy. There the saints hunger no more,\* neither thirst any more, the Lamb feeds and refreshes them for ever. But still they may be sensible of seasons and occasions of rapture, and this appears to be intimated to us in these passages. The joys of the heavenly family and their songs are every now and then awakened afresh, when some new display of grace, or some new prospect of glory opens before them. Just as with the heavenly hosts before. for when the foundations were laid, they sang together anew, and still louder than before shouted for joy.

8. This (Rev. 7: 14-17) would seem rather to be an earthly scene and company. — Ed.

And here I may further observe that in the progress of this book, the Church appears to have taught the angels a still higher joy. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we learned that the Church was teaching the heavenly powers a lesson of God's wisdom (Eph. 3: 10); but here we see the angels practicing, as it were, the lessons they had previously learned. The Church leads the joy, and then the angels take it up, following the living creatures and crowned elders in their praise. (Rev. 5) And again, when the redeemed celebrate "salvation," in Rev. 7, they, as having learned the lesson, say "*Amen.*"

Thus much I would observe on the action of these chapters; but particularly of their contents I could not speak with any certainty of judgment.\* But all ends in the kingdom. as I have noticed. The binding of Satan in the bottomless pit, connected with the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet,

may be called the *morning* judgment (the judgment of the *quick*), ushering in, as it will, the millennial day, or the kingdom. Then at the close of that day, Satan being let loose from the pit to raise the last mischief in the world, the great white throne is erected, before which proceeds the *evening* judgment (the judgment of the *dead*), closing, as it will, the millennial day, or the kingdom. And the day of the Lord being then over, the kingdom will be delivered up, and the new heavens and the new earth will appear, the Church exchanging the kingdom for *God all in all*, or their millennial for their eternal joy, and Satan the bottomless pit for the lake of fire, or his millennial for his eternal doom.†

\*This was written in 1846. — Ed.

†As another has observed: "The inheritor and the inheritance will then both have risen in character. The Second man, or the glorified body, will exceed the first man, or the earthly body, and so the new heavens and the new earth, will exceed in glory and joy the Paradise of creation."

Of all this the prophet has given a passing sight, and then he is called up to another vision. He had before seen the Bride prepared in heaven (Rev. 19), and now he is called to see her descent out of heaven (Rev. 21: 2-8), and by and by he will be called, in order to see herself as descended. (Rev. 21: 9) But now while descending, and he so looking at her, a voice accompanies the descent saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." And after this voice passed. He that sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And when He had thus spoken He addresses John, verifying all that John had heard, and giving him to know that when this came to pass, all would be done, adding, moreover, such warnings and encouragements as may be listened to by all from that moment to the end, being delivered by the Lord in the consciousness of the solemn sanction which the *end* imparts to all things, as indeed it is written: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deut. 32: 29) Thus this vision of the descending city, and this audience of the voices from heaven, and from the throne pass away, and our prophet is carried to a great and high mountain that he might see this city herself, the Bride, the Lamb's wife. (Rev. 21: 9; Rev. 22: 6)

One of those angels who had before carried the seven last plagues is John's conductor now, and in his presence he measures the city, and, that being the sign of security (Rev. 11: 1, 2), he thereby gives us a pledge that there is no agency of destruction against it, but that the very hand which may plague the earth will shelter the Church. The Church as the candlestick may be shattered, but as the Lamb's wife she shall live. This golden city is this Bride of the Lamb — the Church of God now manifested in her perfectness. She has length and breadth and height equal, with twelve foundations, and twelve gates, her wall great and high, and her street of pure gold. Various all this, but all shining and costly, expressing her to be the one that is perfect in holy beauty. And she is not only thus perfect in herself, but she has her dignities as well as her beauties; she is the habitation of the glory of God, the place of the throne, a sanctuary too, as well as a palace, having a presence within her which makes the whole scene a temple. Thus is she the suited dwelling place of kings and priests; and being thus in herself the beautiful one, and bearing with her this honour of the royal priesthood, all that goes forth from her, or enters her, and dwells there, is according to those things. *Light* is shed from her that the nations may walk therein. Water from the river of life flows from her, bearing leaves with it, that the nations may be healed thereby; and all that *goes* in is purity, and all who dwell within are in joy and dignity, having no need of candles, or even of light from the sun, and being in the conscious dignity of their everlasting kingdom. Such is the city of our God. Nothing must touch such a habitation of holiness and gladness and glory, but the very honour of the kings of the earth. They may bring up their glory and honour into

it, but nothing less than that can approach it. All is thus pure and shining within and around her, and she yields forth streams of light and life that all may be gladdened and bless her. This is the manifestation of the *Church*. In this present dispensation the Church is but forming like Eve for Adam; but when the time of the kingdom comes, and *Adam awakes*, then will His Eve be presented to Him, the associate of His joy and kingdom; the saints will be shown all fitly framed together, the Church presented to Himself, a glorious Church, without spot as here, in the place of blessing and government.

Surely all this is beautiful, as is everything of our God in its season. The incarnation and ministry of the Lord had been the manifestation of the *Father and the Son*; the present age is the manifestation of the *Holy Ghost*; and the age to come, and into which this vision of the golden city introduces us, will be the manifestation of *the Church*. For all is perfection in the way of God's wisdom, as in the ways of His love. He tells out to us one secret after another, bringing each in due season out of His treasures. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" But this only as we pass on, beloved; but by and by He Himself will detain us for ever.

I was tracing the character of that holy city which has now been disclosed to us, and observing that everything in it told us that it was the symbol of the Church in her perfectness and manifestation in glory, or the saints in their dominion and honour and I would again, as connected with this, recur to the difference between the Gospel and the Revelation by St. John. The Gospel closes by taking the children to the Father's house, or hiding them in heaven; the Revelation, by leading them down from heaven into the place of dominion over the earth, or manifesting them as the Church of God in the golden city. It is not the mansions in the Father's house which we have at the end of the Revelation to look into, but the place of the sanctuary, and the palace, the residence of the kings and priests unto God. It is not the children in their home, but the saints in their glory whom we see. And all this is in full character, for the Gospel by St. John had been throughout training the children for the Father, but this Revelation by him had been getting the inheritance and glory ready for the saints. It is a further stage in the history of the heavenly family. It is not that they have left the joy of the mansions for the father's house, which the Lord is now gone to prepare for them (John 14: 2), but they are to receive the glory of the inheritance in addition, and that is what is here presented to us. And this day of the descent of the golden city is the promised day of power, the day of the shutting up of the influence of hell upon earth by the binding of Satan in the pit, and for the opening the influence of heaven upon earth by this descent of the city of God; the setting up of that mystic ladder on which the angels of God are to pass from heaven to earth, and back to heaven again.

And the throne of God seen in this city has a new attribute. At the beginning it was the throne of God, and the Lamb only came up to it to take the sealed book from the hand of Him who sat there. But now the Lamb has ascended it. It is now "the throne of God and the Lamb." He has got up to the hill of the Lord, and is now standing in His holy place. For the whole action of the book has been preparing the throne for the lamb, as it had been preparing the golden city for the saints.

Such are the results disclosed now, and thus the action, as I judge, interprets the result, and the result confirms the character of the action. All is harmony in this wondrous book. The action was not that of the Son on high preparing the mansions in heaven for the children, nor the Holy Ghost here preparing the children for the mansions; but it was the Lord (or God in the supreme place for Him) coming forth in the power of one judgment after another to make His enemies His footstool, and then erect His kingdom and lead His saints into it. I have observed in all its holy order and righteous authority, it is the Church as a golden city we get, the symbol of *righteousness* and power united. The Church with the enthroned Lamb descending out of heaven to take association with the earth, and ruling and yet blessing it, presiding over it in righteousness, and yet dispensing to it the water of life,

and the light of the glory, of the very fountains of which she had now become the scene and dwelling place.

Such is the end of the second part of this book of judgment. Through the terrible troubles of seals, trumpets, and vials, we have been led to the blessing of the earth, under the life and light that were in the golden city, where the throne of God and the Lamb is. And as we had a preface to the book in its place, so now we have a conclusion. (Rev. 22: 6-21)

Here we first listen to the angel who had attended St. John, attesting the full truth of all that had passed, and then we listen to the Lord pledging His speedy coming, and blessing (as in the preface) on those who should righteously use the book. We then find that the hearing and seeing of these excellent things so wrought for a moment on the mind of St. John, that he falls down and worships the angel, as indeed he had done before. (Rev. 19: 10) But on both these occasions he had been receiving some overwhelming visions. In chapter 19 he had just seen the marriage of the Lamb in heaven; and now the golden city in her glory and beauty; and his engaged and overpowered affections, awakened by such visions, must account to us for these worshippings of the angel. But the angle rebukes him, as Peter did Cornelius in such a case, and then instructs him in one particular touching this book, which is strikingly different from the instructions given to the Jewish prophet on a like occasion. (Dan. 8: 26; Dan. 12: 4-9) Daniel had seen and heard wonders, but was told to seal them till the time of the end, because the vision was yet to be for many days; but here our prophet is told to publish these things which he had seen and heard, because the time did not now wait, but was at hand.

This marks the mind of the spirit so differently in the Jewish prophet, and the prophet who was standing in our dispensation addressing the saints in St. John. For though events might have to pass in the thoughts of Israel before the kingdom could come, the Church may look for her Lord at all times, and accordingly the Lord at once again breaks in here with an announcement of His speedy coming, and that, too, with the rewards of righteousness, and revealing Himself again, as He had done in the beginning, in his supreme place as the Alpha and Omega.

After this the attending angel returns to his own proper theme, promising a blessing in righteousness on those who obey, and setting aside all the workers of evil; for this is the theme of the book — a book which does not say, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered," but pronounces blessing on the righteous, and doom on all evil doers. For it is not a book of ministering grace, but of exceeding righteousness; it is not sympathies or consolations that we find in it, but judgments. It is the place of Ezekiel which the Lord fills here, as it was that of Jeremiah which he had before occupied in the Gospel. In the Gospel, or in His ministry through the cities and villages of the land, He was the sorrowing, sympathizing Prophet, so that some said, "It is Jeremiah"; but here he stands the Son of man, like Ezekiel in the place of judgment, in spirit saying, "He that hearth let him hear, and he that forbearth let him forbear." "He that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." There was no tear in the eye of Ezekiel, though rivers of water ran down the cheeks of Jeremiah.

All is so perfect in its time. The Lord knew the sympathies of the one as He walked in the land, and saw the moral ruins of Zion; and He can now know the righteousness of the other, as He stands above all that defiled ruin, and apart from it all in judgment.

But still, after all this, Jesus Himself again comes forward, and having set His seal to these revelations and words of the angel, He shows Himself to His saints. He glances at them in all the majesty of the root and offspring of David, and in the beauty of the morning star, and the moment He thus looks out upon them all the desire of the Church is awakened, and, led by the Spirit (whose office

is always to point to Jesus), she is moved to invite Him to come; but once thus, with her desire set in motion, she sweetly goes out in *grace* towards others, as in desire towards Him. and after inviting Him, the bright and Morning Star, to come, she invites others who would "hear" to join her in this, and then those who were "athirst." having some affection towards her Lord just stirred, to come up to the full measure of her desire, and lastly, though the largeness of her heart, whosoever would, in whatsoever mind or state they may be, to come and drink of the living waters with her. Thus was her soul divinely moved upwards and around her. But this was an interruption of the more orderly progress of the book (like Rev. 1: 5, 6) on Jesus being revealed. But we should be prepared for such interruptions; we should not expect that the Lord could be revealed without the Church being moved, as in these places. Praise must full her if His grace be revealed, as there (Rev. 1: 6); desire must move her, if His person or glory be revealed, as here (Rev. 22); and we should all, beloved, be cultivating that longing of heart after Him that will lead us to take a ready part in such raptures of the Spirit in the Bride as these.

But this was interruption, and therefore when it passes, the Lord resumes the more proper theme of the book, and threatens plagues to him who unrighteously adds to it, and loss of life\* and glory to him who unrighteously takes from it. This, however must not be allowed to close all. "Surely I come quickly" is heard again, words which had now broken forth from the Lord three times during this conclusion, for his heart was fuller of that than any other thought, and He would fill ours with it also. All was either to yield to that, or issue in it. Judgment must be executed, but judgment is His strange work. Affliction of the righteous must be gone through, but He never willingly afflicts. All is imperfect till Jesus appear; His own heart is upon this, and this is the last thought that he would leave upon ours. And the saint does respond. "Come, Lord Jesus," that the Lord may thus know that this is His people's desire and point of hope as it is His.

\*This should more properly be rendered, "from the tree (not *book*) of life." — Ed.

Here Jesus the Lord and His ministering angel close their testimony. The apostle then in his turn takes his leave of the saints, saying. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." In the love of the Spirit he commends them to that which is their only provision in the way, till their journey is ended.

Till He comes, come when He may, bringing His glory with Him, they must stand in His grace; for the Lord gives both, and grace leads to glory.

The wilderness is now proving that He has riches and stores of the one for us, and Canaan will by and by prove that He has riches and stores of the other for all who love Him in this thankless and evil world.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"